

OSMP Amazing Facts!

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Amazing FACTS!

There is much about Open Space and Mountain Parks that is remarkable or just plain unique. We are very fortunate to have such a special wild place adjacent to our community. But much of what makes OSMP so special could be lost or destroyed by the careless actions of a few visitors. See if any of these facts surprise you!

Spectacular Species

Some of the plants and animals protected by Open Space and Mountain Parks are rare, threatened or endangered species. Here are a sampling. For more great photos of our rarest creatures, visit our Rare and Threatened Species Gallery.

In the fall, the summits of high peaks become a phenomenal mass of orange, crowded and congested with ladybird beetles meeting and greeting their kin in preparation for hibernation. They converge on rocks, trees, and around every crevice near the peaks to seek warmth, safety by numbers, and the chance to find a mate.

OSMP protects the only Paper Birches in the entire state! The birches in Long Canyon were stranded from the rest of their kind when the climate changed at the end of the Ice Age. The tall prairie grasses along OSMP's foothills are also relicts - botanical leftovers from the last Ice Age.

OSMP is the only site in Colorado where you can find White Adder's Mouth Orchids (pictured at left) and the purple-flowered American Groundnut. American Indians may have brought the groundnuts to the Boulder area as a food source.

Other rare and beautiful plants on OSMP include Rocky Mountain Sedges, Prairie Gentians, Ute Ladies' Tresses Orchids, Rattlesnake Ferns and Grass Ferns. If you're lucky, you may see the orange flowers of a vanishing Wood Lily glinting flame-like from the greenery of a moist canyon.

Peregrine Falcons, Prairie Falcons and Golden Eagles nest on our rocky crags each year. Seasonal wildlife closures protect these great birds. Follow this link to meet some of the incredible animals protected by the closures.

Far-Out History

Ancient hunter-gatherers of the Folsom society lived in this area at least 12,000 years ago, at the end of the last Ice Age. Raging torrents of glacier melt water scoured out Boulder Valley at this time. Human beings may have hunted mammoths in the Boulder area before Boulder Valley was carved out! The city of Boulder began preserving wild lands over 100 years ago! In 1898 Boulder citizens approved a bond issue to purchase 80 acres of land to be used as a "Chautauqua." Over the next twenty-two years Flagstaff Mountain, Bear Mountain, Royal Arch, and Green Mountain were added to the early protected land system. For more information, visit the OSMP History page.

At various times in the past Chautauqua Meadow served as a cattle pasture, a golf course, the site of the Civilian Conservation Corps barracks, and a ski area complete with rope tow before it was protected as a natural grassland. Hiking and picnicking were very popular with Boulder's early residents. Women actively took part in these "mountain tramps." Can you imagine climbing the trail to Royal Arch in a long skirt? Following World War I most women donned pants for their adventures. In the early years of the last century, a privately-owned zoo occupied what is now the beginning of McClintock trail. In 1913, the zoo's collection included twelve deer, four elk, a wolf, two pheasants, two squirrels, two bears and some guinea pigs! When the zoo was closed, the bull elk was allegedly barbecued for a city-wide picnic. Some historical buildings around Boulder are made from beautiful pink Lyons sandstone which was quarried on Open Space and Mountain Parks. Stone from Anderson Quarry, near the mouth of Skunk Canyon, was used in the old Union Pacific train depot still visible on Pearl and 30th Streets. Today Open Space and Mountain Parks protects all its natural and historical resources from collection. The Leave No Trace ethic encourages visitors to "Leave it as you found it."

A Very Popular Place

OSMP receives more visits per year than Rocky Mountain National Park, but all our use is heavily concentrated on just 1/6 the land area of the national park.

Celebrate your Open Space, but please treat it gently so that your great grandchildren can find it as awesome and inspiring as you do.